

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023

SPEECH OF

HON. GUY RESCIENTHALER

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 13, 2022

Mr. RESCIENTHALER. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of Amendment No. 431 in en bloc No. 4, offered by my good friend from Rhode Island, Mr. CICILLINE. I am proud to cosponsor this amendment and urge my colleagues to support it.

This amendment would safeguard important protections for servicemembers and their families by preventing the enforcement of forced arbitration clauses in any dispute covered under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA). The SCRA was passed to ease financial burdens on servicemembers when they are required to relocate for active duty assignments and protects them from eviction, foreclosure, and other financial penalties. Unfortunately, forced arbitration clauses deny our troops the ability to exercise their SCRA rights and protections in court. This is not right. Our servicemembers deserve peace of mind while they are out fighting for our freedoms, which is why Rep. CICILLINE and I are offering this amendment.

It is worth noting this language was included in the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act that passed the House with bipartisan support, but unfortunately was stripped during negotiations with the Senate. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on amendment No. 431 so we can ensure our military men and women can focus on their missions rather than worry about financial burdens at home.

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER SHINZO ABE

HON. PAUL A. GOSAR

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 14, 2022

Mr. GOSAR. Madam Speaker, I rise to commemorate the life of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who was assassinated on July 8, 2022. The whole world mourns the loss of this great leader—the longest serving prime minister in the history of Japan. As the leader of his party, he won an unprecedented four elections spanning a time period of eleven years. His popularity was undeniable.

Prime Minister Abe always focused on the positive contributions made by the Japanese people. Instead of apologizing for the sins of his forebears, he promoted economic and foreign policies that put the people of Japan first. He was not afraid of China and taught the watching world that strength in the face of communist totalitarianism beats coddling and submission. This great patriot never tired in his commitment to fight for his people.

Prime Minister Abe taught the world about true leadership. Take care of your own people. Protect them. Value them.

I offer my condolences and deep sympathies to the people of Japan, and the friends and family of Mr. Abe. They gave the world a

shining star. And now he returns to the heavens.

SUPPORT OF H.R. 7900, NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023

HON. ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 14, 2022

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of my amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act. My amendments seek to better understand the mental health challenges and mechanisms of support available to servicemembers; mandate strong reports which will be critical in enacting better policy for servicemembers in the future; and make defense communities more resilient to the growing threat of climate change.

The first amendment (Amendment No. 322), which my colleague, Congresswoman ELAINE LURIA, has cosponsored, represents an important step forward in better understanding and combatting the epidemic of suicide facing not just the Navy, but the entire armed forces. There is a dearth of information about suicide and suicide prevention in the Navy, particularly on Navy ships. This is why directing the Inspector General of the Department of Defense to compile and publish a report on instances of suicide, suicide prevention, and response within the Navy is so important. This report will be comprehensive and desperately needed, given how little we truly understand why some sailors choose to end their lives, as well as the failures of command and areas where available resources have failed to catch and prevent these tragedies.

Additionally, the report will contain a survey of the mental health teams found on Navy ships and installations, so that we might better understand the limitations faced by these critical teams to properly treat, prevent, and respond to instances of suicidal ideation, suicidal intent, and suicidal attempts of the crewmembers they serve. These mental health teams are critical components of every unit, but do not always have the staff or resources available to provide necessary treatment and counseling to the sailors under their care. This report will be critical in better understanding the shortfalls these teams face, which will allow us to set them up for better successes in the future.

The discussion of suicides in the Navy is a personal one. I have lost constituents in the Navy, particularly this year wherein the shocking number of sailors who died by suicide while serving on the USS *George Washington* in Newport News, Virginia made national headlines. It is my belief that this DoD report will be the first step in better understanding how to prevent another, similar tragedy and see where the Navy could be doing more to actively support its servicemembers during times of mental and emotional crisis.

My second amendment (Amendment No. 323) requires the Inspector General of the Department of Defense to survey and report on programs across the armed services which allow servicemembers to file anonymous complaints and concerns without fear of identification or reprisal from command.

The chain of command is something that every soldier and employee of the Department

of Defense is taught to respect from the earliest days of training. Soldiers know there are some issues they cannot voice without risking the ire of their commanding officers or drawing undue attention to themselves, even if the nature of their complaint is a valid quality of life concern, a note about morale, a safety issue, or any reasonable request for support from existing Department services and programs.

Programs which allow anonymous complaint filing for servicemembers fill a critical gap of inter-unit communication by encouraging soldiers to advocate for themselves through a channel which they know will protect their identity and be taken seriously and reviewed on its merits. However, there is currently no DoD-wide review of where such programs exist, making it difficult to gauge their level of user participation, analyze data on the sorts of complaints filed, or even know which units and branches support such programs. This is a gap in knowledge that merits a proper review by the Department of Defense, so that we may better understand what support our soldiers are asking for and where they are and aren't being given the opportunity to even ask.

My third amendment (Amendment No. 321) seeks to improve adaptation and emergency management coordination between state, local, and federal entities in defense communities, especially the Department of Defense. By creating interagency regional resilience coordinator positions in defense communities, this amendment will enhance military readiness and community resilience. I was pleased to have the support of my colleagues, Congresswoman LURIA, a member of the House Armed Services Committee and veteran of the Navy; Congressman WITTMAN, a senior member of the Armed Services Committee; Congressman MCEACHIN; and Congresswoman SANCHEZ on this important amendment.

As a Nation, our aging stormwater infrastructure, housing stock, emergency management systems, and power grid exacerbate the threats of climate change. Thanks to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the United States is making our infrastructure more resilient and creating jobs in the process. These investments in our infrastructure will help protect our communities and prevent needless loss and human suffering.

The Department of Defense recognizes that, as the climate changes, "leveraging knowledge and actions when planning climate change adaptation and emergency preparedness and response requires expanded collaboration with surrounding communities." This is especially true in Hampton Roads, Virginia due to the significant federal footprint, including 15 military bases, and the region's geographic complexities.

In my district and throughout Hampton Roads, communities play an essential role in supporting critical defense installations. Community assets, infrastructure, and services ensure the region's bases are ready and provide the region's 83,000 active-duty service members and their families with amenities to live, get to work, and recreate. The threat of sea level rise and increasingly frequent and severe storms, however, jeopardize these community services and military readiness.

Fortunately, the region has developed strong cooperation and expertise in this regard. This acumen and spirit of collaboration are clear in the two recent Joint Land Use Studies and a 2016 report released following

the Hampton Roads Sea Level Rise Preparedness and Resilience Intergovernmental Pilot Project.

Thanks to the hard work of local governments, federal partners, the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, and academic support from Old Dominion University and others, much has been done to implement the recommendations of these studies.

That being said, much work remains to be done. Recommendations from the earlier pilot project and Joint Land Use Studies that are ripe for action include a number of items that require collaboration with the federal government. The establishment of Interagency Regional Coordinators for Resilience positions would be well suited to address persistent challenges that have hindered the “whole of government” and “whole of community” approach that the growing threats require.

As the climate continues to change, lessons learned from these partnerships would be beneficial to defense communities and others that support federal entities and assets of national importance.

Addressing the threat of climate change and ensuring members of the armed services have access to comprehensive mental health services and mechanisms to confidently advocate for their quality of life is not only crucial to ensuring military readiness, addressing these threats is morally imperative.

Lastly, I am pleased that my amendment (Amendment No. 618) regarding the transfer of federal land currently occupied by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the City of Norfolk has been included in this package. I am disappointed to lose a valuable asset in my district as they continue their planned move to Rhode Island, and it is important that this economic impact does not further affect the city. Transferring the land without cost to the city and in a timely manner will allow Norfolk and the Army Corps of Engineers to better protect the city from future flooding.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank Chairman SMITH for his work on behalf of our Nation's military and his support for these initiatives, and I urge my colleagues to support these important amendments.

HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF WOODHAVEN POLICE CHIEF ROBERT TOTH

HON. DEBBIE DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 14, 2022

Mrs. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Chief Robert Toth on the occasion of his retirement from Woodhaven Police Department. His thirty years of service to the Woodhaven community are worthy of commendation.

A graduate of Siena Heights University, the Eastern Michigan University Police Staff and Command School, and the FBI National Academy, Chief Robert Toth began his career as

an intern for the Adrian Police Department, later serving as a Police Officer. On January 13, 1992, he was hired by the Woodhaven Police Department. Over the course of his career, he has served in every position that the department has to offer. In his thirty years at the Woodhaven Police Department, Chief Toth has served as a Patrol Officer, as an Undercover Narcotics Investigator, in the Traffic Bureau, and in the Detective Bureau. As a valued leader in the department, he was promoted to Sergeant, Lieutenant, and then Deputy Chief, finally becoming Chief of Police in August 2017.

In addition to his job at the Woodhaven Police Department, Chief Toth has served as a member of the Downriver SWAT team for twenty-two years before retiring in 2016. He also took time to share his extensive law enforcement experience with others and volunteered as an advisor for the Woodhaven Police Explorers for fourteen years, taught classes at the Wayne County Regional Police Academy, and acted as drill instructor at the State Explorer Academy. Though he may be retiring, Chief Toth remains active in the department's Honor Guard. A treasured mentor and friend, he continues to reside in Woodhaven with his wife Lauren and their two sons.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me today in congratulating Chief Robert Toth for his exemplary career in public service at the Woodhaven Police Department. I join with Chief Toth's family, friends, and colleagues in extending my gratitude to him for his honorable service and thank him for his role in protecting our community and the people of Woodhaven for the past three decades. We wish him the best in retirement.

HONORING THE LIFE OF MAJOR NHIA LONG VANG

HON. JIM COSTA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 14, 2022

Mr. COSTA, Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor Nhia Long Vang, a Major in the Special Guerilla Unit (SGU) Secret War in Laos, a husband, father, and a beloved community activist in the Central Valley.

Nhia was born in the farm fields of Laos on October 12, 1939. His parents, Neng Yia Vang and Mai Vang were gifted with six children; the eldest being Nhia. Neng was the Head Chief of the village. Nhia attended first grade and second grade at 19 years old. He was then recruited by the United States Central Intelligence Agency to serve in the “Secret War in Laos” during the Vietnam War. Nhia was promoted to Sergeant by General Vang Pao and attended “Special Guerilla Unit” training in Phitsanulok, Thailand. He reported directly to the Central Intelligence Agency as he carried out top secret missions.

Missions led by Nhia were not unnoticed by his superiors. He led intelligence missions in Ho Chi Minh Trail, Road 7, so they could sur-

veillance the Pathet Lao and Vietnamese armies' operations, reported to CIA headquarters in Laos. Not long after being promoted to Captain in 1969, he was assigned to oversee the Hmong CIA soldiers' unit. Heavy combat fighting was expected in this unit. Despite suffering severe injuries, Nhia survived a shrapnel injury, and in 1970, the troops trained under him were transferred to support the Plains of Jars.

His contributions to helping in the war were endless. Nhia helped in aiding and rescuing American pilots after crashing in the jungle, and after attending special advanced operational military training, he was promoted to Major. His final assignment was supporting the Royal Laos armies in their fight against the Vietnamese army. His bravery, courage, and leadership undoubtedly saved many lives.

Nhia received asylum in Nam Pong, Thailand before relocating to the United States with his family. He married Lee Yang and they had children. In 1972, he married Ka Moua. They had a loving family raising 13 children. Nhia and his family eventually moved to Missoula, Montana. He cleaned Missoula's canals and after two years, they moved in 1982 to Santa Ana, California before settling in Fresno in 1983.

After serving the Hmong Community as a translator for the health clinic, Nhia returned to his roots and became a farmer mentoring others on how to be successful in selling Southeast Asian vegetables to wholesalers and retailers. Nhia used his experience to help families become self-sufficient while providing resources to health services and education and stressed the importance of voting. He showed unparalleled support, both financial and emotional, to Hmong and Lao veterans and their families. Nhia and I visited the White House and California State Capitol with Charlie Waters and Bill Dietzel, regarding local veteran community affairs. He worked with Dan Payne to have the community represented in the Central Valley Veterans Day Parade. Nhia enjoyed the Hmong New Year celebrations in Fresno and supported many Hmong and Lao cultures. In 2001, he was one of the Hmong Community Organizers campaigning and urging Hmong families to donate in support of the 9/11 families. The group raised over one hundred thousand dollars for the Red Cross.

His service earned him numerous special recognitions and certificates from Congress, the California State Assembly, and the County of Fresno. In 2021, the City of Fresno recognized him for his many accomplishments and service to the community. He educated people on General Vang Pao's legacy every December and advocated for the naming of Vang Pao Elementary School in Fresno. He advocated for the Hmong Language Program in Fresno Unified School District which passed in 2016.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life of Major Nhia Long Vang of the Special Guerilla Unit (SGU) Secret War in Laos. May we continue to be inspired by his story.